



Nebraska Resources

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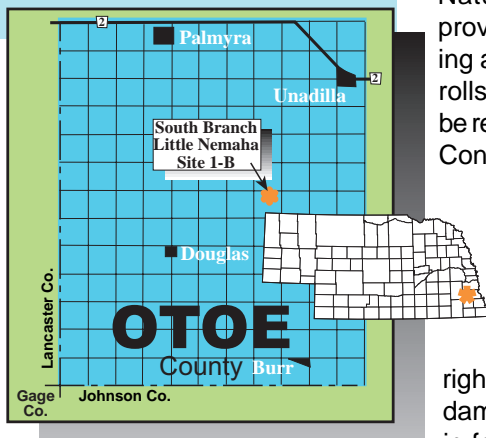
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Watershed Tract Auctioned

By Tom Pesek

A public auction was held in Douglas on January 7, 1998, to dispose of a 40-acre tract at Site 1-B of the South Branch Little Nemaha Watershed. In 1995 the Nemaha NRD utilized the Small Watershed Flood Control Fund to purchase the tract at a cost of \$38,200 when it acquired land rights for the watershed structure.

The tract is located in western Otoe County, approximately 30 miles from downtown Lincoln. It includes a mix of cropland, grassland, and woodland along with an old farmstead site where all buildings have been razed. Structure 1-B has minor impact on the tract as there is only 0.3 acres of permanent pool and 12.3 acres of flood pool on the 40 acres.



The tract brought a high bid of \$1355 per acre or \$54,200 at the auction conducted by Jack Bernard of Auburn. The

Natural Resources Commission approved the bid at its January 29th meeting and the tract will go back on the tax rolls. Proceeds from the land sale will be returned to the Small Watershed Flood Control Fund to assist with future land rights acquisition for flood damage reduction project sites. The Small Watersheds Flood Control Fund was established by the Legislature in 1963 to assist local sponsors in the acquisition of land

rights (easements or fee titles) for flood damage reduction projects. If acquired in fee title, the tract must be disposed of within ten years after purchase. Each

tract is offered at appraised value to local subdivisions of government and selected state agencies who might be interested in the tract. If none decide to purchase it, the tract is then sold at public auction.



1 9 9 8 Nebraska Water Conference

The 27th Annual Nebraska Water Conference will be held in Kearney, Nebraska at the Regency Inn on **March 10th and 11th 1998**. The next three annual water conferences will share the theme of "**Nebraska Water 2000**". Participants will look into and discuss the specific topics of; information for the future, planning for the future, and management for the future during the next three conferences. Each year the conference will include a general discussion of the specific topic generally by an outside speaker as well as discussion of Nebraska aspects of the general topic and examples. The annual conferences bring together a variety of people and perspectives to discuss issues important to Nebraska as well as the nation. For additional information on the upcoming conference contact the **Nebraska Water Center at (402) 472-3305**.



Natural Resources Enhancement Fund receipts for the first 12 months of the fund's existence totaled **\$2,409,740.28**. The fund is financed by a one dollar per ton fee on fertilizer sold and is scheduled to remain in place until December 31, 2000. The fees are paid to the Department of Revenue and are credited to the Enhancement Fund's account administered by the Natural Resources Commission. The receipts are distributed to the state's natural resources districts based on a formula and are to be utilized for water quality programs. The districts match one local dollar for every three dollars received from the fund.



DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

A strong effort is underway to seek improved management of floodplains in the Western United States. The interest in developing a strong partnership to carry out this effort came as a result of significant flooding during the last 18 months in California, Colorado, North and South Dakota, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon and Washington. Nebraska had its share of flooding in 1993 during the great Midwest flood, and recovery efforts are still not complete.

Governors' Nelson of Nebraska and Leavitt of Utah have been leading the challenge for improved floodplain management. In late 1997, the two Governors presented a report to the Western Governors' Association and there was unanimous consent from their fellow governors to proceed. A sense of urgency came from the very fact that over \$5 billion in federal, state and local funds will be spent helping Western communities and agricultural interests recover from the 1996/1997-flood season. As the number and cost of disasters continues to rise, improving the management of floodplain areas becomes even more critical. Over the last 30 years, average annual riverine flood damages have exceeded \$2 billion. From 1984 to 1994, those costs escalated, averaging \$3 billion per year.

Federal policy is increasingly placing more focus on non-structural alternatives to reduce huge financial outlays for flood recovery. The necessity for flood insurance will receive greater attention. Strict requirements for levee construction and maintenance are also mandated for communities and agricultural areas that want to be eligible for federal reimbursement for flood losses. These changes are intended to reduce the growing costs of flood disasters to the federal, state and local government. Thanks to the work of Governors' Nelson and Leavitt, the Western states have now adopted that philosophy. Work is now underway to gain greater attention of this problem throughout the United States, and to make sure there is a strong partnership between federal agencies and all of the states to accelerate floodplain management.

-Dayle Williamson



Increased Cost of Compliance (ICC) Coverage

On June 1, 1997, **The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)** modified the Standard Flood Insurance Policy to include coverage that will help reduce the financial burden of bringing flood damaged buildings into compliance with local floodplain management ordinances. Increased Cost of Compliance (ICC) coverage under the NFIP provides for payment of a claim to help cover the cost to comply with the community floodplain management ordinance after a flood event. When a flood damages an NFIP insured building and the community declares the building to be substantially damaged or repetitively damaged, ICC will help pay for the cost to elevate, floodproof, demolish or relocate the building up to a maximum benefit of \$15,000.

ICC coverage is in addition to the building coverage for the repair of actual physical damages from a flood. It is not an optional coverage. All regular program policies with building coverage under the Standard Flood Insurance Policy issued or renewed on or after June 1, 1997 will include ICC coverage. Buildings located in emergency NFIP communities are excluded from ICC coverage.

Policy rates will increase from \$4.00 to \$75.00 per policy depending on their flood risk zone and amount of coverage as a result of ICC provisions. It is important to remember that all claims paid by the National Flood Insurance Program are drawn from the policy premium base. The NFIP is a self-sustaining program that is designed to have no impact on the federal budget.

If flood insurance policy holders have questions on ICC, they should contact their insurance company, agent, or the NFIP at 1(800) 427-4661. If communities have questions on ICC, please call FEMA Region VII at (816) 283-7002, or Nebraska's NFIP State Coordinators at the Natural Resources Commission (402) 471-2081.



Richard Mercer Honored

Nebraska Natural Resources Commission member Richard Mercer was honored by the Nebraska Agribusiness Club with their **Award for Public Service to Agriculture** at the 31st Annual Awards Banquet on November 6, 1997. The club recognizes individuals who make significant contributions to Nebraska agriculture and agribusiness. Richard, along with his wife, Eileen, and their two sons, operate a general farming and cattle feeding operation in Buffalo County. He has served in numerous leadership roles in his community as well as state and national organizations. One of his most recent honors was being one of six national finalists in the National Cattlemen's Association 1996 Environmental Stewardship program.

Members and staff of the Natural Resources Commission congratulate Dick. His leadership and commitment over the years is appreciated.

New Officers Elected

At their annual organizational meeting held January 29, 1998, members of the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission elected officers for the coming year. Elected to serve a one-year term as Chairperson of the Commission was Vince Kramper of Dakota City and Vice Chairperson, Wayne Davis of Hay Springs.

Vince, a Dakota County farmer and businessman has served on the Commission since 1983 and represents the interests of the Missouri Tributaries River Basin. Wayne, manages a farm-ranch operation in Sheridan County and has served on the Commission since 1993 representing the Niobrara-White-Hat River Basin.



Agreement Finally Reached on Relicensing of Kingsley Dam

In the past few years, there have been several articles in this newsletter concerning the relicensing of Kingsley Dam and its related facilities by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The original licenses held by the Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District and the Nebraska Public Power District expired in 1987. Those Districts have

been operating Kingsley Dam, its related canals and diversion structures, and five hydropower plants under annual licenses ever since. It appears now that new longer term licenses will be granted soon, hopefully in 1998.

The reason for optimism is that in mid-January of this year agreement in principle was reached on all issues by all parties in the relicensing proceedings. That agreement did not come easily or quickly. Since the original applications for new licenses were filed in 1984, several attempts were made to find a negotiated solution on a number of difficult issues, especially how to protect endangered species downstream. Little progress was made until 1992 when Governor Nelson proposed the **"Nebraska Plan."** That plan included the storage in Lake McConaughy of water in an environmental account and the release of the water in that account when it would be of greatest benefit to the endangered species. While not initially accepted by all parties, a modified version of the "Nebraska Plan" served as the cornerstone of a July 1, 1997 agreement among the Department of Interior, and the states of Nebraska, Wyoming, and Colorado. That agreement (see Fall 1997 newsletter for more details) in turn served as the basis for the relicensing agreement reached in mid-January. At the time of this printing, the parties to the relicensing process are finalizing the terms of that latest agreement and will offer those as license conditions for action by FERC.



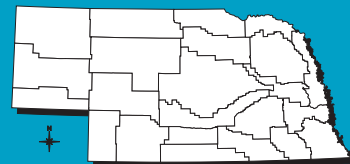
New Head of Planning Appointed

Dayle Williamson, Director of Natural Resources, has promoted Steve Gaul to head the Commission's Comprehensive Planning Section. The position was previously held by Jerry Wallin, who retired last year. Steve has been with the agency since

1979 and has been involved with most planning activities over the past 18 years. Gaul will supervise a staff of ten and coordinate work on the Commission's planning activities. According to Steve, *"Emphasis in the last five years has been on providing natural resources data in an elec-*

tronic format and making it easy for outside entities to access and utilize that data. While we will maintain that emphasis we also will seek ways to make greater use of that electronic data in current and upcoming planning studies". Some current planning activities include: the development of DEMs/DOQs, digitization of soil survey information to SSURGO national standards, agency participation in the Lower Platte River Feasibility Study, developing a report on Nebraska's 1995 water use, supporting a Bureau of Reclamation study of rural domestic and small community water supply in Nebraska, and integration of planning section efforts with those of the Commission's floodplain management section.

Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Program Update



Approved Soil and Water Conservation Practices	Program Accomplishments in 1997	Program Accomplishments To 12/31/97
Terraces	424 miles	9,328 miles
Terrace Underground Outlets	345,751 feet	3,185,493 feet
Water Impoundment Dams	39	1082
Grade Stabilization Structures	26	549
Irrigation Tailwater Recovery Pits	10	825
Diversions	138,373 cu. yds.	1,163,912 cu.yds.
Grassed Waterways	324 acres	9,916 acres
Water and Sediment Control Basins	27	314
Dugouts for Livestock Water	44	481
Pasture or Range Seeding	4,497 acres	31,469 acres
Critical Area Plantings-Grass	21.5 acres	412.5 acres
Windbreaks	3,102 acres	26,617 acres
Windbreak Renovations	20 acres	3,013 acres
Irrigation Return Pipe	13,622 feet	496,570 feet
Planned Grazing Systems	158,745 acres	2,184,140 acres
*Irrigation Surge Valves	0	632
Irrigation Water Management	19,827 acres	45,347 acres
Repair of Practices	19	19
Stream Bank Stabilization	2	2
TOTAL DOLLARS	\$3,295,860	\$45,687,830

The **Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Fund** was established in 1977 to provide state financial assistance to Nebraska landowners installing approved soil and water conservation measures. The fund is administered at the state level by the **Natural Resources Commission** and is coordinated by the state's **23 Natural Resources Districts** at the local level with technical assistance provided by the **Natural Resources Conservation Service**. For additional information on the Soil and Water Conservation Fund,

** Rescinded as separate practice effective 7-1-94
Figures are rounded to the full unit*

EQUAL OPPORTUNITU/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

As an agency of state government the Natural Resources Commission is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer and is committed to these principles. As part of that responsibility the agency has adopted an Affirmative Action Plan which outlines the agency's policies with respect to employment and establishes goals for the implementation of those policies.

A policy statement supporting the principles of equal employment opportunity and affirmative action is included in the Plan. The policy clearly states the Natural Resources Commission's support for equal employment opportunity and affirmative action for all persons without regard to their race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, mental or physical disability or political affiliation. Another part of the Plan is an agency policy statement regarding sexual harassment, which outlines procedures for dealing with any instances of sexual harassment.

Goals established within the affirmative action plan include increasing the representation of females within the professional staff, increasing the representation of social minorities in the staff and continuing to provide equal employment/affirmative action training opportunities to all staff, with emphasis in the supervisory staff.

New Nebraska Resources Development Fund Project Proposals

By Tom Pesek

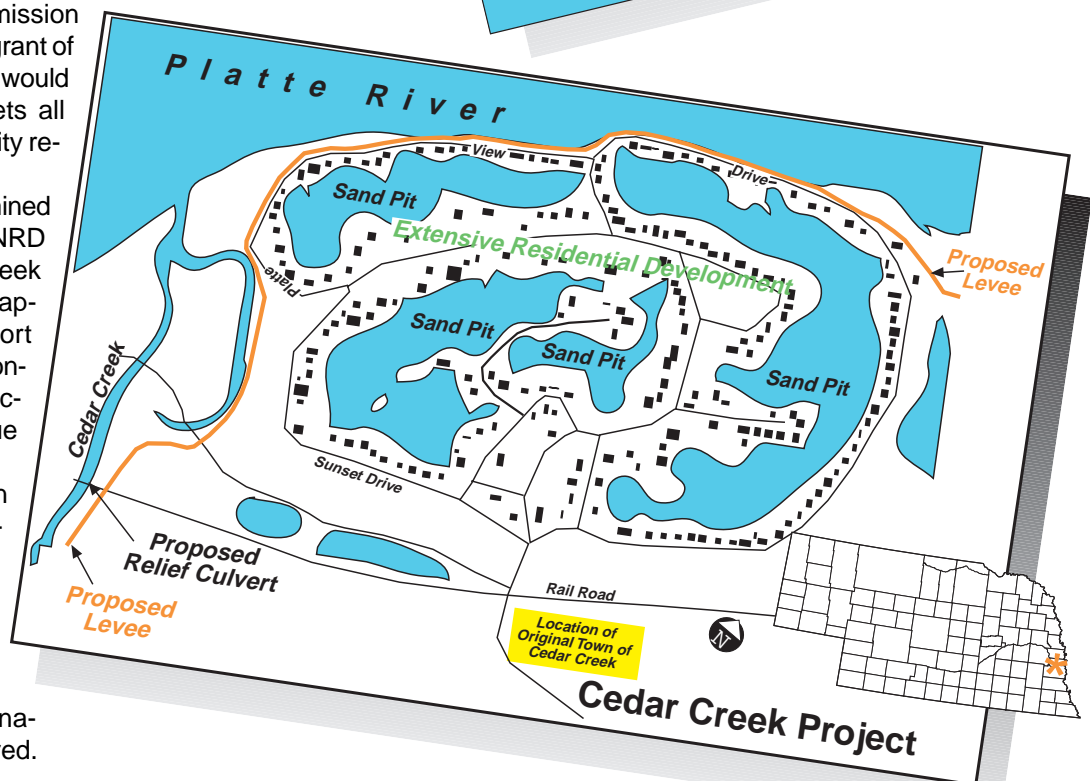
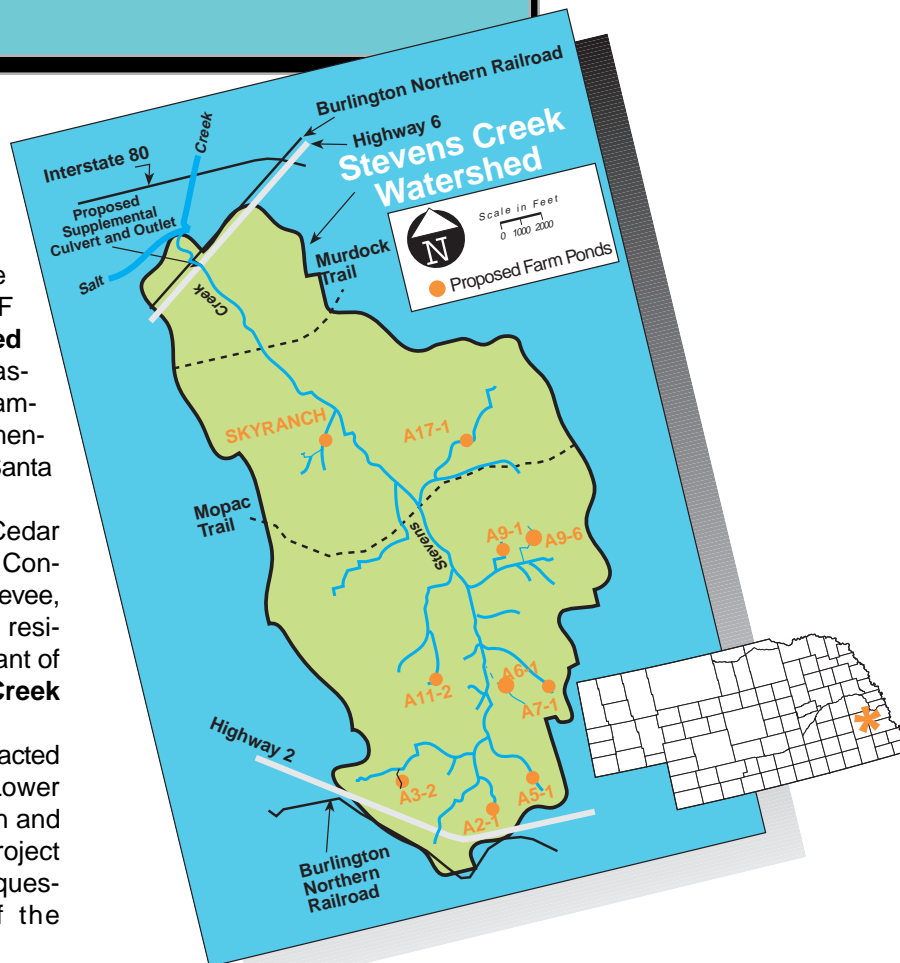
The Natural Resources Commission recently received project proposals requesting Nebraska Resources Development Fund (NRDF) assistance for two flood damage reduction projects. The Lower Platte South Natural Resources District has requested a NRDF grant of **\$2,544,787 for the Stevens Creek Watershed Project** located east of Lincoln. The state funding assistance would be used to construct 10 small flood damage reduction structures (dams) and install a supplemental box culvert under Highway 6 and a Burlington and Santa Fe Railroad line (see map at right).

The Lower Platte South NRD and the Village of Cedar Creek are jointly sponsoring the Cedar Creek Flood Control Project. The project involves the construction of a levee, primarily along the Platte River, to protect the main residential area of the village from flooding. A NRDF grant of **\$1,672,500 has been requested for the Cedar Creek Project**.

At its January 29, 1998, meeting, the Commission acted on these project proposals. It determined that the Lower Platte South NRD could proceed with an application and feasibility report on the Stevens Creek Watershed Project and directed the sponsor to address a number of questions/comments that arose during re-project proposal. The Commission also indicated that a NRDF grant of 50-70% of total project costs would be likely if the project meets all project eligibility and feasibility requirements.

The Commission determined that the Lower Platte South NRD and the Village of Cedar Creek should not proceed with an application and feasibility report for the Cedar Creek Flood Control Project. This negative action was primarily taken due to the following factors:

- (1) the proposed design of the levee makes its technical feasibility very questionable;
- (2) the project as proposed does not meet FEMA standards; and
- (3) non-structural alternatives were not duly considered.

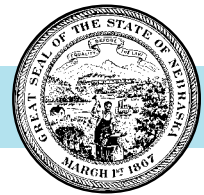


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The Natural Resources Commission
invites you to check out our Homepage.
Your comments and suggestion are
appreciated.



STATE OF NEBRASKA
E. Benjamin Nelson, Governor



**NEBRASKA
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**

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